Computer Merchants extends customer engagement with mobile

Computer Merchants

Snapshot

Customer: All sorts of businesses, from the small local specialist to some of Australia's best known names, depend on Computer Merchants to help them get the most from technology.
www.computermerchants.com.au

Challenge: Giving customers transparent access to data held across two traditional transactional business systems.

Solution: Provide customers with a mobile app to quickly demonstrate the business value, follwed by a more substantial mobile web portal. Both projects delivered with LANSA.

Key Benefits: The mobile solution is key to growing managed services. It provides complete transparency and a better customer experience.

The Challenge

Computer Merchants is a leading Australian-based provider of full data center solutions and services, helping its customers to get the most from technology.

Its two exceptional systems of record are crucial to the company's ongoing success. The first is its ERP system, that manages customer contracts, purchases from technology suppliers, dealings with freight companies and staff scheduling. The second is its very specialized system for monitoring the health and performance of the IT infrastructure of its customers.

To provide a better customer experience, Computer Merchants wanted to give its clients mobile access to their data held across both systems. Clients already had web access to the infrastructure monitoring system, but the interface was dated, and the underlying web technology was not efficient enough to expand to the ERP.

Mobile App

Norm Jefferies, Managing Director at Computer Merchants, wanted to make sure that the mobile solution would truly add value, not just a token that would end up on the shelves. Relevance and usability were his key criteria. A diverse group of staff contributed ideas, drawing on their own specialist skills. "Regardless of their role, everyone is encouraged to find ways to improve the customer experience," said Jefferies.

LANSA

"Their ideas, combined with feedback from customers, gave us the basic functionality we wanted to include in the app, but we needed to find a way to translate that into a tangible solution. We had long known about LANSA's low-code rapid application development platform, so it made sense to ask LANSA for advice."

LANSA's consultants used the storyboard process to visualize what the app could look like and discuss the options with stakeholders, evolving from a collection of ideas, to a prototype, to the actual 'CM Live' app that was rolled out to customers. From concept to app, the project took four weeks.

The CM Live app received an enthusiastic response from customers. It allows them to view equipment details, maintenance expiry dates, system health updates, balance of prepaid support hours, and more.

Web Portal

Based on the success of the initial app, Computer Merchants decided to use LANSA for a mobile web portal that would serve as a framework for customer access to all kinds of information.

In stage one of the portal, 'CM View' was delivered. CM View provides customers with a real-time consolidated view of their critical IT infrastructure, issuing alerts when system thresholds are exceeded. It helps Computer Merchants to be pro-active in the support it provides.

In stage two 'CM Care' was delivered, giving customers access to their contracts and associated assets, while forecasting of upcoming renewal fees is helping customers to better prepare their budget and cash flow. Customers are pleased with the solution and some are even using it to keep track of agreements and renewals with other parties.

Delivery of stage one and two took 25 and 13 days respectively, including the setup of a flexible and expandable portal structure.

The Outcome

"Over the years we have invested in our strong and reliable systems of record and both the app and the web portal draw heavily on them. Giving customers mobile access invites them into our world. We are confident in our systems to allow for absolute transparency and we are confident in LANSA to provide secure mobile access," says Jefferies.

"Customer service is something we put our hearts and minds to. We want to earn every repeat purchase by offering something better than anyone else. The mobile solutions we delivered with LANSA are key to growing our managed services, with many customers adding service level agreements to the free mobile offerings. That tells us that we are offering something that makes a real difference to our customers," continues Jefferies.

"Two relatively simple solutions helped to transform our systems of record into systems of engagement. It illustrates to our customers how IT can play a role in achieving business success," concludes Jefferies.

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